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Fifty-ninth year

Letter dated 8 September 2004 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the address by Russian Federation President V. V. Putin of 4 September 2004 in connection with the recent terrorist acts in the Russian Federation (see annex).

I should be very grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the fifty-ninth regular session of the General Assembly under item 151 of its provisional agenda, "Measure to eliminate international terrorism", and also as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Andrey **Denisov**

* A/59/150.

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Annex to the letter dated 8 September 2004 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Address by Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin

4 September 2004

It is difficult to speak, and it is painful.

A terrible tragedy has occurred in our world. Over the last few days, each of us has suffered greatly and taken deeply to heart all that was happening in the Russian town of Beslan. There, we found ourselves confronted not simply with killers, but people who used their weapons against defenceless children.

And now, I should like, first of all, to address words of support and condolences to those people who lost what they treasure most in life — their children, relatives and dear ones.

I ask that we remember all those who perished at the hands of terrorists in recent days.

* * *

There have been many tragic pages and severe ordeals in Russian history. Today, we are living under conditions that came about after the collapse of a vast and great State, a State, which, unfortunately, proved to be unable to survive in a rapidly changing world. But, despite all the difficulties, we were able to preserve the core of that giant — the Soviet Union. And we named the new country the Russian Federation.

We all expected changes, changes for the better. But we proved to be absolutely unprepared for much of what changed in our lives. Why?

We are living under an economy in transition and a political system that does not correspond to the state and level of our society's development.

We are living at a time when internal conflicts and inter-ethnic discord, which were once firmly suppressed by the ruling ideology, have intensified.

We stopped paying due attention to defence and security issues and we allowed corruption to undermine our judicial and law enforcement systems.

Furthermore, our country, which at one time had the most powerful system for defending its external borders, suddenly found itself defenceless both from the East and from the West.

It will take many years and billions of roubles in order to create new, modern and genuinely protected borders. But here also we could have been more effective, if we had acted at the right time and professionally.

In general, we need to admit that we did not understand the complexity and danger of the processes at work in our own country and in the world as a whole.

In any case, we were unable to react to them in an adequate manner. We showed ourselves to be weak. And the weak get beaten.

Some want to wrest from us "a bigger piece of the pie", and others are helping them.

They are providing help in the belief that Russia, as one of the major nuclear powers in the world, still represents a threat to someone. Therefore, this threat must be eliminated.

And terrorism, of course, is just an instrument to achieve these aims.

As I have said many times already, we have confronted crises, revolts and terrorist acts time and again. But what has happened now is an inhuman crime by terrorists that is unprecedented in its cruelty. It is not a challenge to the President, the parliament or the Government. It is a challenge to all of Russia. To our entire people.

This is an attack upon our country.

* * *

The terrorists consider that they are stronger than us. They think that they can frighten us with their cruelty, paralyse our will and demoralize our society. And, it would seem that we have a choice — either to resist them or agree to their demands. To surrender, to let them destroy and dismember Russia in the hope that they will finally leave us in peace.

As the President, the head of the Russian State, as someone who swore an oath to defend this country and its territorial integrity, and simply as a citizen of Russia, I am convinced that, in reality, we have simply no choice at all. Because to allow ourselves to be blackmailed and to succumb to panic would be to condemn millions of people to an endless series of bloody conflicts like those in Nagorny Karabakh, Transnistria and other well-known tragedies. We cannot ignore an obvious fact.

What we are dealing with is not simply individual acts intended to frighten us or isolated terrorist attacks. We are dealing with direct intervention on the part of international terrorists against Russia.

This is a total, cruel and full-scale war that is taking the lives of our fellow countrymen again and again.

The entire experience of the world shows that such wars, unfortunately, do not end quickly. Under these conditions, we simply cannot and must not live in as carefree a manner as previously.

We must create a much more effective security system and demand that our law enforcement agencies carry out actions that correspond to the level and scale of the new threats that have emerged.

But the most important thing is to mobilize the nation in the face of this common danger.

Events in other countries have shown that terrorists meet the most effective resistance precisely in places where they encounter not only the power of the State but also an organized and united civil society.

* * *

My fellow countrymen!

Those who sent the bandits to carry out that dreadful crime made it their goal to turn our peoples against each other, put fear in the hearts of Russian citizens, and unleash bloody inter-ethnic strife in the Northern Caucasus.

I should like to say the following in this regard.

First, a series of measures aimed at strengthening the country's unity will soon be prepared.

Second, I consider it necessary to create a new system for coordinating the forces and means for exercising control over the situation in the Northern Caucasus.

Third, it is necessary to create an effective anti-crisis management system, including entirely new approaches to the way law enforcement agencies operate.

I should like to point out in particular that all these measures will be carried out in complete accordance with our country's Constitution.

Dear friends!

We are together experiencing very difficult and painful days. I should like now to thank all those who showed endurance and civic responsibility.

We were and always will be stronger than them, stronger through our morals, our courage and our sense of human solidarity. I saw this again last night. In Beslan, which is literally permeated with grief and pain, people were caring for and supporting each other more than ever. They were not afraid to risk their own lives for the lives and peace of others. Even in the most inhuman conditions, they remained human beings.

It is impossible to accept the pain caused by such loss. But these ordeals have brought us even closer together and have made us re-evaluate many things.

Today we must be together. That is the only way that we will vanquish the enemy.